

House Coronavirus Response Coordinator, and a lot of other top officials at the State Department and White House as well. No one—not a person—can explain to me what evidence is being used to support that border restriction right there for Point Roberts.

So I am here on the Senate floor today to make sure that President Biden and his administration understand me. At the very least, we just need an emergency exemption from these restrictions for this small little Point Roberts community right here so that they can get their economy back up and running and that people there have the services that they need.

I am going to continue to press the administration on this and do whatever I can to help this community. But I want this on the record: Maintaining this ban on cross-border travel for Point Roberts is absolutely unacceptable. It should have been addressed months ago, and I will not stop until this is resolved.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

(The remarks of Mr. DURBIN pertaining to the introduction of [S. 2384] are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I am here to talk today about a subject of urgency for our Nation but a subject that many Democrats in this body don't want to talk about. I mean Afghanistan.

Thirteen American soldiers, dead; 169 civilians, dead; hundreds more American civilians left behind to the enemy; billions of dollars in military equipment abandoned to the enemy, like you see in the images right over my shoulder. Yet, nearly a month after this disastrous evacuation, the worst foreign policy disaster in this Nation's history since Vietnam, there has been no accountability. No one has been fired. No one has resigned. No one has been relieved of command.

Instead, what we have heard is the most incredible and, frankly, insulting parade of excuses and evasions from the President of the United States and the rest of his leadership team. They have said the evacuation debacle was an "extraordinary success." That is a quote. That is from the mouth of the President himself. Let that just sink in for a second.

Thirteen American soldiers, including from my State of Missouri, lost—

13—169 civilians dead; hundreds of Americans left behind enemy lines to fend for themselves, left to the Taliban, left to ISIS. Has an American President ever—ever—left behind American civilians on the field of battle—hundreds of them—and then called it an extraordinary success? I can't think of a time in American history.

It was a disgrace, what the President said. It was untrue, what the President said. Yet he goes on and on and on. And now President Biden and his team say they didn't leave any Americans behind. They said, in fact, Americans weren't abandoned to the enemy.

I mean, this is simply insultingly false. By their own estimates, hundreds of American civilians were left behind and are still there. Americans are still trapped in Afghanistan, trying to get out, trying to be rescued, left to their own devices. Yet the President of the United States insists that it never happened; it was all a success; all is well.

The President said it had to be this way. Those soldiers—what?—had to die? I mean, what does that even mean—that the military had to abandon billions of dollars of equipment to the enemy; that civilians, hundreds of them, had to die; all those Americans had to be left behind? I mean, is he serious about that? Does anyone honestly believe that? Does anyone honestly believe that this was the only possible outcome, that the death of American soldiers and the loss of civilians was the only possible outcome, the only way to withdraw?

It is absurd, and an honest leader would acknowledge it. In fact, an honest leader would never have said it. Yet President Biden and his team continue to say it day after day.

Joe Biden has blamed other people. He has pointed the finger at the people of Afghanistan. That is remarkable. These people now suffering under the rule of the Taliban—they are at fault, apparently. He has blamed and his administration has blamed the intelligence Agencies. They cast aspersions at the commanders on the ground. And remarkably—remarkably—many Democrats in Congress seem to be fine to go along with all of this, with these excuses and these evasions, this attempt to whitewash what has happened in Afghanistan and is happening as we speak, as Americans remain behind enemy lines.

The Democrat leader has stood on this floor and praised Joe Biden's handling of this crisis, applauded it. Just yesterday, he said right here on the floor that my efforts to get accountability for this crisis in Afghanistan were a waste of the Senate's time. Those were his words: waste of the Senate's time. He also said it is something that only the far right is interested in. His words: "the far right." What an insult to the American people.

All I can say to that is: Why don't you come to Missouri? Why don't you talk to the families of soldiers who are serving? Why don't you talk to the

families of those who have served in this 20-year war? Why don't you talk to veterans? Why don't you look the people in the face who are grieving and who are demoralized and who are shocked at what happened over the last few months in Afghanistan, shocked at the abandonment of American civilians? For that matter, why don't you just talk to this administration's own officials who rushed to tell reporters, off the record, that they were horrified that the President had left behind American civilians—horrified.

To brush all of that aside, to pretend that none of that really matters—that is all a distraction; there is nothing to see here—that is insulting, and it is wrong.

Until there is accountability, I will force the Senate to actually vote on Joe Biden's nominees for leadership positions in the State Department and the Department of Defense. In the face of this crisis, in the face of this debacle, the least the Senate can do is vote.

But the Senate ought to be doing a lot more than that. While grieving families are still waiting for answers, while Americans are still left behind enemy lines, we should be getting the truth. That ought to be our focus. We should be demanding accountability, not sweeping it under the rug.

So let me just pose a few—a few—of the questions that I think need answering: Why was the administration so unprepared for what transpired during its evacuation? Why didn't it plan for the potential fall of Kabul, for the potential surge of the Taliban, for the potential collapse of the Afghan Security Forces? Why weren't they prepared to withdraw while keeping Americans safe?

Joe Biden and his team didn't coordinate the drawdown so American citizens could leave the country; they ignored them. They told us the Afghan Security Forces were 300,000 strong; they were never that large. They promised the security forces were well trained; they weren't.

Has no one bothered to read the reports of the inspector general for Afghanistan? I commend them to you. They are harrowing. It is harrowing reading. The inspector general has been warning for literally years that the Afghan Security Forces were unprepared and unreliable. He has warned that our own Defense Department has, for years, concealed the true state of the Afghan Security Forces and their inability to carry out their mission. These aren't secrets. These are reports, many of them published in the Nation's leading newspapers.

Yet the administration didn't factor them into their planning, didn't seem aware of the facts on the ground, didn't seem able to prepare to deal with the realities, even as Americans were put into harm's way. It really does make you wonder: What was the Biden administration actually focused on? I mean, what was it doing with its time? What was the President doing with his

time for all of those months—or Secretary Blinken or Secretary Austin or the National Security Advisor? What were they doing while Afghanistan collapsed into chaos?

I think the facts suggest an answer. Rather than focusing on protecting Americans from the enemy, rather than focusing on getting Americans safely out of Afghanistan, they were focused on fighting a phony culture war that they invented and that appears to be their top priority.

Just consider: On June 11, when Secretary Austin was asked if he thought that the U.S. military was a fundamentally racist organization—this was at a hearing in the Armed Services Committee here in the Senate: Is the U.S. military a fundamentally racist organization?—he said: I can't give you an answer. And, instead, he talked about the military's urgent support for "equity"—his words. One week later, 21 districts in 9 Provinces had fallen under Taliban control in Afghanistan, and the Afghan Security Forces began to abandon their posts.

On June 21, Secretary Blinken announced the "Progress flag" would fly at the State Department, a special flag that celebrates, in Blinken's words, "diversity and intersectionality"—that famous catchphrase of critical race theory. The very next day, the Taliban seized the main Afghan trade gateway as the enemy's advance began to pick up pace.

On June 23, General Milley said in his testimony to the House Armed Services Committee: "I want to understand white rage." That is his quote. And he defended the administration's recent focus on White extremism in the military. The very next day, U.S. intelligence assessed that the Afghan Government would collapse within 6 months of our withdrawal.

On July 1, Secretary Blinken was busy changing U.S. passports to create new selections for nonbinary, intersex, and gender-nonconforming categories. The very next day, American troops withdrew from Bagram Air Base, what had been the hub of American power in Afghanistan, leaving it for the final time.

On July 14, Secretary Blinken invited the United Nations to formally investigate "the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia" in the United States. He invited the United Nations, that frequently corrupt body, to investigate his own country for racism, xenophobia, and racial discrimination. Meanwhile, at the very same time, even as Blinken spoke, the Taliban offensive was surging across Afghanistan.

On August 9, Secretary Austin was busy crafting a new, controversial COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all of our servicemembers. The very next day, U.S. intelligence officials warned that the Afghan Government would collapse within 90 days or sooner.

On August 17, Jake Sullivan—that is the National Security Advisor—said

that the Taliban were helping to provide "safe passage" for Americans fleeing Afghanistan. Well, one week later, the terrorist attack at Kabul left 13 American soldiers dead, at least 169 civilians wounded, and, shortly thereafter, hundreds of Americans left behind as our last transport lifted off.

Facts are facts. These are the facts, and they tell the story. Joe Biden and his team were more focused on their culture war than they were on protecting Americans. That is the long and the short of it. They were more interested in imposing a radical left social agenda than in getting Americans out of Afghanistan.

They were interested in using the military as a social experiment rather than respecting it as the warfighting institution it was built to be. Rather than making decisions that were sound in tactics and sound in strategy, Joe Biden and his team were aiming to please their radical, woke, progressive base. And the American people paid the price.

Now the American people deserve accountability for what has happened. They deserve accountability for the lives lost. They deserve accountability for the civilians killed, accountability for the Americans left behind.

And that is what this body is for. That is this body's responsibility. It may be an inconvenience to the Democrat leader; it may be an unwanted responsibility for supporters of the President; but it is our job nonetheless.

Americans have died. Americans have been abandoned. The Nation deserves an accounting, and it is not too much to ask the Senate to do its job. It is not too much to ask the Senate to get the truth, and it is not too much to ask the Senate to force accountability for this terrible crisis that this President has disgracefully led us into.

I can say, for my part, I will do everything I can to get that accountability, to get that truth, and to give the American people the answers that they deserve.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, with North Korea test firing ballistic missiles last week, you might ask: Where is the United Nations?

There are a series of international sanctions aimed at North Korea's nuclear program. These sanctions are in accordance with the U.N. Security Council's regulations passed in the wake of previous North Korea nuclear tests and ballistic missile tests. There is a U.N. Security Council Sanctions Committee on North Korea that is charged with monitoring these sanctions on North Korea.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that an expert panel working on a report for this U.N. committee has faced roadblocks from Chinese representatives, supported by Russia in some circumstances.

China and Russia supported these sanctions, but now they appear to be running interference for North Korea so North Korea can continue to violate the reason these sanctions were put on.

The expert panel is supposed to report the facts. And then by reporting the facts, they aren't representing national governments and shouldn't be representing national governments.

It is blatantly clear that the Chinese representative is doing the bidding for the Chinese Communist Party. The footnotes with dissenting comments are anonymous, but there is no doubt where they came from. In other words, China.

In one case, it is as petty as insisting that a reference to a company with "Taiwan" in its name should include an assertion that Taiwan is a province of China. That is something you hear from China all the time. Everyone knows China is obsessed with making others pretend that Taiwan is not an independent country.

That leaves no doubt where these objections are coming from. You can draw a very straight line back to General Secretary Xi. The bigger problem is that other objections seem designed to minimize and paper over the violations of these sanctions by North Korea. That is as good as confirmed by suspicions that China has been helping North Korea evade the sanctions that China supported in the first place and still claims to support.

General Secretary Xi probably thinks that letting North Korea run wild with its nuclear weapons program would cause problems for the West. And we all know that the West is very concerned about North Korea's developing of nuclear weapons and the ability to deliver.

General Secretary Xi is very shortsighted when he takes that view that he wants to cause problems for the West by helping North Korea, because it can't be in China's interest to have a nuclear-armed and unstable regime as a next-door neighbor, which North Korea is a nuclear-armed and a non-stable regime.

General Secretary Xi's strategy of sowing chaos is playing with fire. That is why all of this activity going on in the U.N. and China trying to cover up the violations of the sanctions is dangerous not just for the U.S. interests, but it is very dangerous for China and the world.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I spent those several weeks that we were away from Washington, DC, around Labor Day in Kansas, and, unfortunately, it is clearly evident that inflation has returned. Gas prices are up, prices at the grocery store are up, and further price hikes are on the horizon.

Unfortunately, price increases at the grocery store and at the gas pump and, really, everywhere else put the greatest